United Nations E/CN.6/2015/NGO/164

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 January 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-ninth session
9-20 March 2015
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

14-65913 (E) 040215

Please recycle

Statement

MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child is committed to the advancement of women and through its work with individuals, communities, and governments it endeavours to reduce obstacles to woman's active participation in all spheres of public and private life. The organization's work 'With and For Women' effectively applies the broad framework of human development with its four pillars as Expansion of Human Capabilities; Widening of Choices; Enhancement of Freedom and Fulfillment of Human Rights. We believe in women's potential as drivers of sustainable development and appreciate global efforts to promote participation of women and their empowerment in terms of education, employment and the environment as a major step in achieving poverty eradication and social integration, which should pave the way for decent work for all. We continuously strive towards reducing the barriers through supporting reforms of institutions to ensure competence and capacity for gender mainstreaming at all levels of governance while strengthening community actions for equitable gender norms nationally and in the South Asia Region.

MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child itself is an equal opportunity employer; promotes women participation at the highest level and endeavours to create a safe and equitable work environment for women with training opportunities to advance their career path.

Betterment of health and development of adolescent girls and women with a focus on realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights is integral to our work. We believe sexual and reproductive rights are indivisible, inalienable, interrelated human rights that are fundamental to achieving gender equality and human development.

The organization recognizes that violence against women throughout their lives derives from patriarchy and harmful cultural practices. These may include certain traditional or customary practices and acts of extremism, in addition to their gender, to women's race, language, caste, religion, workplace, community and society. We therefore emphasize the need to prevent vulnerability, discrimination, violence and marginalization based on gender, age, race, caste, class, lineage, marital status, sexual orientation and identity, livelihood, migrant status, HIV status, disability, etc., aiming to remove discriminatory laws, policies and programmes and addressing social and economic barriers. We support integration of efforts on addressing violence against women to the extent possible, to improve its effectiveness in terms of reach and desired outcome.

MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child, largely pursue the route of gender transformation with an ecological approach to address inequitable gender norms and power dynamics at the levels of family, community and service delivery that undermines women's access to opportunities of growth and health care. We will continue to empower girls and women, strengthen community support and quality delivery of essential services that includes education and health to affect the targeted health and development outcomes. MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child is a strong advocate and will be persistent in its efforts for ending harmful traditional practices like 'Child Marriage', an extreme form of child rights violation that not only limits opportunities for girls to realize their full potential but deprives most of them from basic human rights to health and well-being.

Our commitment towards The United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995 is reflected through our continuing work and commitments for the future under the categories given below:

Education and Training of Women: Non-discrimination in access to education and training lays the foundation of equal relationships between men and women. We recognize that increased years of schooling of girls has a positive impact on delaying age at marriage, first conception and also reduces vulnerabilities, risks and experiences of physical and sexual violence especially by spouse and family members. The school drop-out rate among girls is higher in comparison to boys especially among the rural and socio-economically marginalized populations in this part of the world. The opportunities and choices for meaningful engagement like vocational training within schools or out of schools are scarce.

We reaffirm our commitment towards addressing all such discrimination to fulfil compulsory education for all girls with special focus to include girls in socio-economically marginalized families. Our work with young girls and boys and their parents will continue to emphasize the importance of completion of education and acquiring vocational/livelihood skills while we continue to advocate with government and other agencies to make opportunities and resources available. Also, critical to this effort will be to demystify stereotypical roles of women that act as barriers in exercising choices in learning and earning opportunities while multiplying efforts to enhance self-esteem enabling them to realize their full potential.

Women and Health: Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and this right must be secured throughout the whole life cycle in equality with men. We recognize prevalent problems that pose serious threats to women's health and well-being like lack of water (especially potable water) and sanitation facilities; disproportionate distribution of food and resources affecting girls and women in resource deficit households; son preference leading to discrimination affecting the nutrition and access to health care of the girl child; lack of programmes to reach out to adolescent girls on nutrition and sexual and reproductive health while many continue to live in conditions that forces child and early marriages, child bearing; increases vulnerabilities to physical and sexual violence and above all unequal access to health care services. We also share concerns on rising incidences of accidents and injuries (especially those caused by violence and neglect) to women of all ages.

We will continue our work with communities and informing policies and programmes to address these problems for all women to attain good physical and mental health to live a productive and fulfilling life. We will constantly promote women to have control on all aspects of their health, in particular their own sexuality and fertility; basic to their empowerment as stated in The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China — September 1995, Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

Women and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Reproductive health eludes many of the people in this region due to inadequate levels of knowledge on human sexuality and inappropriate or poor quality reproductive health information and services; high risk sexual behaviour, discriminatory norms and practices, negative attitude towards women and girls and limited power over their own sexual and reproductive health especially adolescent girls. We are committed to advance

efforts for multiplying experiences of safe motherhood among women and girls. We strongly believe for all women, especially those young and vulnerable, to have equitable access to information, education and services in a friendly manner (with respect, privacy and confidentiality) to deal with their sexuality in a positive and responsible way protects and promotes their sexual and reproductive health. Critical to it is to empower women and girls to be responsive to the needs of their own sexuality and reproduction; garner skills to negotiate and assert for ones' safety and access education and services to lead a satisfying and safe sex life.

We recommend and reaffirm our commitment for all especially women and girls to receive comprehensive sexuality education either in formal or in informal settings and to the need to promote mutually respectful gender relations to reduce vulnerabilities and risks to health and well-being of women and girls and mitigate its impact on her health, economic and social status.

The Girl Child: Girl child is discriminated against, from the earliest stages of life, through her childhood and into adulthood. MAMTA: Health Institute for Mother and Child strictly stands by 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child' and reaffirms its commitment towards ending discrimination and neglect towards girl child and all harmful traditional practices like child marriage through its work to sensitize and educate parents, key community stakeholders, teachers, health service providers, law enforcement agencies and policy and programme makers for strong community actions, watchful service delivery and effective legislations, policies and programmes. We will continue our work to empower girls with transformative approaches that includes work with boys as well towards enhancing self-esteem of girls.

Our work will specifically reaffirm and promote equal access to education, vocational learning and livelihood opportunities; health care, shared responsibilities and informed decision making while empowering girls to be responsive to the needs of her sexuality and reproduction.